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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: PRESIDENT ALIYEV'S EU MEETINGS IN
BRUSSELS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Donald Lu, for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During his trip to Brussels, President Ilham Aliyev met with both European Commission President Barroso and EU Council High Representative Javier Solana. According the readout provided by the Council representative in Baku, Aliyev and Barroso discussed Azerbaijan's economy, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), EU-AJ cooperation, and energy policy. With Solana, Aliyev focused solely on NK and energy issues. Little new ground was reached in these meetings, however, and largely served as an opportunity for Aliyev to vent his frustration with Turkey over its future rapprochement with Armenia. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On May 6 Claire Delessard, Political Advisor to Peter Semneby, Special Representative on the Caucasus of the Council of the European Union, provided poloff with a readout of President Aliyev's meetings with European Union representatives during his trip to Brussels. Delessard read to poloff directly from the official EU meeting notes.

COMMISSION PRESIDENT BARROSO

¶3. (C) In the April 28 lunch meeting with President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, President Aliyev largely focused on Azerbaijan's economic outlook. He presented a number of rosy statistics about Azerbaijan's economic growth, and stated that Azerbaijan was not affected by the global financial crisis. Barroso asked Aliyev about the possibility of economic cooperation with Armenia, to which Aliyev replied that this was not possible until the NK conflict is solved. He also said that if Armenia had behaved "normally," it could have participated in regional projects like the Tbilisi-Kars railway.

¶4. (C) On the NK conflict, Aliyev complained about UN Security Council resolutions not being implemented and Azerbaijan's territorial integrity not being respected. He said that NK could have a land corridor to Armenia and a high degree of autonomy. On self-determination, however, Aliyev said "Armenia already has a state." He was not supportive of further people to people contacts between Azerbaijan and Armenia. He stated that Armenia's military spending as a percentage of its GDP was high, but Azerbaijan's military spending was also high, and "it would be wise for Armenia to behave well and not force Azerbaijan to take any more steps."

¶5. (C) Aliyev then said he was happy with the level of cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan, and "was ready to

cooperate as much as the EU wants." He asked for the European Action Plan to include more mobility for Azerbaijani citizens. On energy, Aliyev said the Nabucco project should have a coordination mechanism at the ministerial level. He also said that delay on Shah Deniz phase II gas was due to Turkey's delay in signing a transit agreement. On reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, Aliyev said he did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. He said he did not know whether NK was included in the discussion between Turkey and Armenia.

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE JAVIER SOLANA

16. (C) On April 29 President Aliyev met with the EU Council's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana. This meeting focused largely on energy policy and Turkey-Armenia rapprochement. On energy, Aliyev proposed building a pipeline under the Black Sea if Turkey continued to stall transit negotiations. He also repeated his call for a coordination mechanism at the ministerial level for Nabucco. He doubted that Iran would be able to contribute anything to a future pipeline project, as they consume as much as they produce. Aliyev stated that major investment would be needed in order to allow Iran to export.

17. (C) On Turkey and Armenia, Aliyev repeated that Azerbaijan would not interfere in the internal affairs of other states. However, he said Azerbaijan may have to adjust its policies, as NK and Turkey-Armenia rapprochement are

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interconnected. He stated that the GOAJ was informed about the "road map" but not consulted on it. He believes that normalization would hurt Turkey-Azerbaijan relations, as without the closed border Armenia will have less incentive to compromise. He said, however, that if Armenia withdraws from the five territories, "several things could move." Solana replied that Turkey-Armenia rapprochement could provide an impetus for the resolution of the NK conflict. Aliyev said, however, that "this could be true in theory but experience shows otherwise."

COMMENT

18. (C) These meetings were largely formulaic, with little new ground reached. Delessard pointed to the call for a ministerial coordination mechanism on Nabucco as the only new item discussed. She stated, however, that Aliyev had told Peter Semneby before this trip that he had a gas agreement from Russia on the table, but wanted to take this trip to Brussels before signing anything. Delessard also expressed disappointment that neither meeting discussed democracy or human rights issues, despite her efforts to put several bullet points on these topics in the briefing papers. In comparison, Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner raised several human rights issues in her meetings in Baku in January.

LU